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ABSTRACT

Both practical and thecretical issues pertaining to the evaluatien of mainstreaming programs for minority group children are addressed in this paper. Problems and issues in the evaluation of educational treatments are presented, with attention to the variables of stating goals and objectives and monitoring children's progress. A critique of large and small mainstreaming evaluation studies is presented, with an emphasis upon the adequacy of evaluation models and the insights they may yield for improved evaluation designs. The appraisal of dependent measures (such as attitudes, achievement, self-concept, and cost-effectiveness) is considered. Issues related to the evaluation requirements of Public Law 94-142 are discussed. The paper concludes with a general statement of evaluation procedures and guidelines to assist in the evaluation of mainstream programs. (Author/MK)

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EVALUATING MAINSTREAM PROGRAMS FOR MINORITY GROUP CHILDREN.

REVISED

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Evaluating Mainstream Programs for Minority Group Children

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Significant concerns have recently been articulated in regards to evaluation of mainstream programs for minority group children (Gottlieb, Agard, Kaufman & Semel, 1976; Jones, 1976). Several facts help to explain why this is so. First, recent work has pointed out that many evaluation measures presently in use are entirely foreign or mainstream objectives. Second, there are problems in the analysis of what goes on in the mainstream classroom. Third, a critical area of importance in evaluation of programs for mainstreaming children is the extent to which mainstreamed children are accepted by their peers. There are additional problems in the evaluation of mainstream programs for minority children (Dent, 1976; Johnson, 1976; Samuda, 1976), many of which must be avoided. It seems important, therefore, as we develop programs and before implementation becomes finalized, that a variety of evaluation alternatives be examined. This paper will present relevent mainstream evaluation considerations, with special attention given to concerns unique to activities involving minority group children.

Critique of Studies on Minority Concerns

The negative effect of various labels on the minority child has been a source of serious concern (Jones, 1972). At issue is

the belief that many special education labels are stigmatizing, affect negatively children's self-concepts, and doubly penalize minority group children who are discriminated against by virture of their racial or ethnic identity and who must endure a stigmatizing label as well. Additional studies have reported evidence of the distaste and embarrassment felt by the impact of labels (e.g., Hobbs, 1975; MacMillan, Jones, & Aloia, 1974). This should be sufficient to justify the concern which has been expressed by minority members.

Public Law 94-142 represents the standards that have over the past several years been laid down by the courts, legislatures, and other policy bodies of our country. In keeping with the provisions of the new law, there can be no general argument convincing enough to set mainstreaming aside. It is sound in ideology, its political-economic basis is frugal, and its methological techniques seem pedagogically sound. However, it has little accountability to the children it serves (Johnson, 1976). Thus, we must, where minority children are concerned, be extremely cautious until there is much more clarity in the expert opinions which seek to verify its utility and until there is significant documentation of its effect upon the lives of our children.

Kendall (1977) investigated the effect of reintegration on reading achievement and self-concept of three groups of retarded children. Results indicated that reading achievement and self-concept of segregated and integrated EMR children was lower than that of regular class EMR children. The results of this investigation seem

to have serious implications for minority children, who in many instances have damaged self-concepts.

Issues in Assessment of Minority Group Children

The fundamental issue in the testing of minority group children spring from the persistent and undeniable fact that there exist a difference between minority group test scores and white Anglo-Saxon test scores (Samuda, 1976). Minority groups repeatedly fall at one standard deviation below the mean score of whites, especially on tests which purpose to measure levels of intellectual functioning. An understanding of the problems and issues of testing especially when related to minorities, requires some elaboration of the opposing views and theories of the nature-nurture controversy (Cancro, 1971). Thus, to gain proper appreciation of the effects and implications of testing, it is necessary to view the interpretations of the fact of one standard deviation difference in proper context.

An examination of the technical problems in the appraisal of the test performance of minority group children and the issues and fallacies that flow from interpretations of the difference between the average performance of majority and minority group individuals are not mere academic exercises. The implications and consequences of testing for minority group individuals are real, drastic, and pervasive in their effects at all levels and stages in the lives of minority individuals. Such far reaching consequences are apparent in the labeling of minority group children as mentally retarded, and

in the process of grouping and placement of such children.

Ability grouping for minorities, inevitably leads to ethnic and socio-economic separation, thus, to racial imblance in the classroom and the perceived "inherent intellectual inferiority" of blacks in particular. Standarized tests of intelligence potential, which stratification leads to labeling and the consequent effect of lowered self-concept and other related matters, lead to poor learning conditions and the inevitable inferior performance of those students on tests of achievements. Coleman (1966) and Dunn (1968) showed that at the national level minorities comprise more than 50 percent of those classified as mentally retarded. In an intense study study conducted in one school district, Mercer (1973) dramatically illustrated the way test scores are used to cause the exaggerated mislabeling of minority group children. Mercer's 8-year study of mental retardation, showed that of the children studied (predominantly Mexican American and Black), 75 percent of those classified as mentally retarded had been mislabeled and incorrectly placed. Mercer's contention is that so-called intelligence tests as presently used mirror the standards, values, and experiences of the white Anglo Saxon middle class only. Consequently, when those tests were used with populations that do not correspond to the norm, there were four times more Mexican Americans and three times as many blacks in classes for the retarded as would have been expected.

In order to consider what is needed in the way of procedures to effectively assess black students for mainstream placement, we must first examine present assessment procedures and their appropriateness for providing an accurate assessment of black children (Dent, 1976). Recognizing the shortcomings of existing assessment procedures and the fact that no existing psychological instruments can provide the needed information, I am suggesting several elements which an effective system of assessment can be erected for minority group children:

1. The assessment must provide accurate information concerning the student's present level of cognitive functioning within the context of his cultural background and experience.
2. Assessment must identify the specific educational needs of the individual rather than to focus on inferred intellectual deficits.
3. The assessment must be a continuous process.
4. The assessment must focus on the strengths which the student brings to the academic situation which can form the foundation for new skill development.
5. School personnel must gain a thorough understanding of the above stated issues, if assessment for placement and appropriated pedagogical treatment, according to Public Law 94-142, is to have the slightest chance for yielding benefits for minority students.

Evaluation Within the Context of Public Law 94-142

Evaluation is a key feature of Public Law 94-142. Section 618 of the Act is devoted specifically to evaluation. The point of emphasis is that, objectives should be specified, the means to achieve those objectives outlined, and the instruments and measures by which success is gauged should be identified. It appears that the latter activity will present a challenge because we will learn that the proper instruments are really not available. But I think we need to be sensitive to such problems, for we are being forced to evaluate kinds of programs with instruments that neither measure success nor show appropriate sensitivity to the tough methological problems that remain unsolved.

It should be clear that there is no such thing as evaluating mainstreaming. Mainstream programs are quite diverse. Some will be concerned with minority group children specifically, others will be designed for children without any concern for racial designation. The most important point is that information is needed concerning what goes on in least restrictive environments (Jones, Gottlieb, Guskin, & Yoshida, 1978).

Population Diversity

There is a critical need to realize that mainstream students are diverse. Those who evaluate programs must be sensitive to such differences. Not only do they vary on racial characteristics, but they vary on social class characteristics, and with respect to whether they have had a special class experience, or have not had

such an experience. There is reason to believe that these different kinds of students should be taken into account as we begin to evaluate mainstream programs. In evaluating mainstream programs it must be realized that different evaluation goals are required for different subpopulations of children. First, there are children who formerly were enrolled in self-contained special classes. Numbers in this category are becoming smaller due to current federal, state and local pressures. Consequently, there is a serious need to evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to provide re-entry into the mainstream for children in this group.

A second subpopulation of children includes children who would have been placed in self-contained special classes had self-contained classes retained their popularity. The experiences of these children will be much different from those who were enrolled in regular classes, placed in self-contained special classes, and returned to regular classes. Presently, most mainstreamed classes probably are enrolling children both from subpopulation one and subpopulation two. For evaluation purposes, it would seem that the most appropriate strategy would be to treat the referred to subpopulations as separate groups in data analysis.

Program Diversity

There is an excessive amount of diversity in mainstream programs (Jones, et. al., 1978). Rather than a single model, there are major program differences in such areas as who is integrated, how long they have been in the regular clas room, the educational

system involved, teaching strategies and support systems used. A careful description of these methods of integration needs to be made since a variety of models have been applied.

Problems and Practices

One of the very difficult problems that we get into, and one that can be avoided, is that often we contribute characteristics to race that might be due to social class. It is referred to as a race and social class confounding. There is an error which is perpentrated and repeated and it is simply where we compare lower socio-economic status minority group children with middle class caucasian children. That is something that should be avoided, but which is not, and causes us to contribute many things to race that should not be contributed.

Attention should be paid to the reality that evaluation activities will be different for different audiences. But we need to remember that in part, mainstreaming developed out of the concerns of minority groups with the belief that: (a) Minority group children were not receiving a good education in the segregated special classes, (b) that they were stigmatized in such classes and, (c) with the consequence that their self was impaired, their achievement below average, their preparation for the future inadequate. And so if we are going to evaluate mainstream programs, we should look at these areas:

1. The proportion of minority group children relative to caucasians in the different education arrangements.
2. The appropriateness of their placement.
3. The impact of their placement on achievement, attitudes, self-esteem, and related matters.

I would like to address a few additional concerns that are unique to the evaluation of the impact of Public Law 94-142 on minority group children. My first suggestion is that minority group teachers, administrators, and scholars need to be involved in the conceptualization and execution of evaluation activities. Particularly, in programs where there is concern about the impact on mainstreaming on minority group children. And I note that our insights can be very valuable here.

My second suggestion is that there should be serious concern about the percentages of minority group children in segregated classes. However, we cannot be satisfied with mere removal from the segregated special class, but must also be concerned with the appropriateness of any subsequent placement. The least restrictive alternative suggests that some minority children may need self-contained classes. However, we must be alert to the increase in enrollment in classes for the learning disabled who were formerly in classes for the EMR. The substitution of one setting for another may be harmful (Jones, 1977).

Evaluation Areas

According to Jones (1976) among the important areas and considerations that might be given attention in evaluating mainstream programs are the following:

I. Attitudes of School Personnel

- A. Superintendents
- B. Directors of Special Education
- C. Principals
- D. Teachers

II. Students Attitudes, Achievement, Adjustment, and Acceptance

- A. School attitudes of mainstreamed students
- B. School attitudes of regular class students
- C. Achievement of mainstreamed students
- D. Achievement of regular class students
- E. Adjustment of mainstreamed students
- F. Adjustment of regular class students
- G. Acceptance of mainstreamed students by regular class students

III. Community Attitudes

- A. Parents
  1. Of mainstreamed students
  2. Of regular class students
- B. School Boards

IV. School Attendance Rates

V. Instructional Time and Instructional Quality

VI. Appropriations of Mainstream Placement

VII. General Evaluation Consideration

VIII. Source of Bias in Data Collection

IX. Evaluation Level, Evaluation Types, Evaluation Timing

X. Evaluation Limitations

Attitudes of School Personnel

Any evaluation of mainstream programs will require information about attitudes toward mainstreaming of a number of school personnel. A critical question to be answered concerns the attitudes toward mainstreaming of those who set policy and direction in the school district e.g., the superintendent and special education director. The attitudes of building principal, regular classroom teachers, and support personnel must be investigated also. Nonsupport of mainstreaming by personnel at any level can lead to failure.

The attitudes of regular teachers toward mainstreaming is particularly critical. It is true that the call for mainstreaming is rooted in civil rights and moral issues and hence should be enthusiastically endorsed and supported by teachers. It is, however, equally true that regular classroom teachers are deeply affected by mainstreaming, for it may require reorganization of their classrooms and pedagogical skills which they may not possess. Often the accommodation of mainstreamed children may mean an increase in class size, and the children added are likely to be ones who are least understood and with whom teacher are least equipped to deal (blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, lower SES whites).

Depaendent Measures

If the true impact of mainstreaming is to be known, information will be needed from a variety of sources. Among the more obvious data needs are those on student achievement, student-teach-

er relationships, relationships with other students, general feelings about attending school, and attitudes of administrators, teachers, parents, and pupils. Data on school attendance rates, student adjustment and acceptance, and program cost-effective will be needed as well. Such information should be obtained on nonmainstreamed pupils, since there has been concern that mainstreaming may impact negatively upon the adjustment and achievement of the regular class pupil. Some work has pointed out that students, teachers, parents, and administrators, believe that the time teachers take to provide instruction to the mainstreamed students makes the teacher less accessible to regular students. The classroom environment is thought to be less stimulating and demanding because of the presence of such students. Convincing data will need to be accumulated on such matters to allay the misgiving noted.

The Numbers Game

Public Law 94-142 requires federal, state, and district officials, to provide data on the number of children served, including number of children mainstreamed, number removed from self-contained special classes, decrease in the number of minority group children in self-contained special classes, and so forth. While this information has its purposes and is among the easiest to obtain, it is also among the most useless, primarily because of issues that it does not address, for example, the appropriateness,

of the alternative educational placement and resulting improvement (or lack of it) in social adjustment, academic achievement and other outcomes pressured to accompany mainstream placement.

Summary

In evaluating activities for minority group children there should be a match between objectives, the instructional program, and the assessment. To do this, our objectives should be specified, the means to achieve those objectives outlined, and the instruments and measures by which we gauge our success should be identified or developed.

This paper has attempted to present a variety of issues and practices related to evaluating mainstream programs. It should be apparent from the foregoing analyses that problems related to the mainstreaming of minority group children are not insurmountable. By giving attention to matters addressed, many pitfalls characterizing previous special education innovations can be avoided, and it will become possible to integrate minority children according to recent federal mandates and, in time know the effectiveness of our efforts.

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